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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MUSCAT 000859

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR NEA/ARP (S. STEINGER), DRL (J. DEMARIA)
STATE ALSO FOR NEA/PI (S. FRANCESKI)
STATE PASS USTR FOR J. BUNTIN, A. ROSENBERG, AND L. KARESH
DOL FOR J. SHEA, B. SHEPARD, AND J. RUDE
US MISSION GENEVA FOR LABOR ATTACHE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ELAB](#) [ETRD](#) [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [KMPI](#) [PHUM](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF MANPOWER REPORTS RAPID LABOR REFORM
PROGRESS

REF: MUSCAT 531

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) In a May 31 meeting, the Minister of Manpower showed the Ambassador completed draft legislation of all labor reform commitments made to Congress by the Minister of Commerce and Industry. The Minister reiterated his commitment to complete the reforms ahead of time and said that it was now merely a matter of time before the legislation is reviewed by the Cabinet of Ministers and submitted to the Sultan. The new regulations will rescind all previous legislation permitting MOM involvement in committees, will outline procedures for strikes and collective bargaining, and will allow more than one labor committee in a company. The Minister encouraged members of Congress to visit Oman to see personally steps the government is taking. End Summary.

Draft Legislation Complete

2. (SBU) In a May 31 meeting, Minister of Manpower Juma bin Ali bin Juma showed the Ambassador completed draft legislation of all labor reform commitments made earlier by the Minister of Commerce and Industry (reftel). The Minister spoke frankly about the laborious undertaking it has been, but beamed with pride when relaying the International Labor Organization's (ILO) praise of the legislation. According to the Minister, the ILO reviewed the draft legislation on collective bargaining and the right to strike and commended the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) on exceeding the ILO's minimum requirements. While the Minister was unable to share a preview of the legislation, he said that it would be merely a matter of time before the legislation is reviewed by the Cabinet of Ministers and submitted to the Sultan for final approval. The various drafts are currently under review and discussion among the MOM staff and representatives of labor committees (aka unions) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry he said. The Minister reassured the Ambassador, "When Oman promises to do something, you know we will...and it will be done on time."

3. (SBU) When asked about some of the details of the legislation, MOM staff said that everything the House Ways and Means Committee chairman has asked for has been addressed, including rescinding all previous legislation permitting MOM involvement in committees, procedures for allowing striking and collective bargaining and for allowing more than one committee in a company.

4. (SBU) In another effort to address concerns regarding possible situations of forced labor, the Minister outlined a new program that will require companies to pay employees through a direct deposit system that can be verified by the MOM. MOM officials expect the program to be implemented by the end of the year and will require the largest companies to participate first. Although the program will be phased in, additional companies, including employers of domestic servants, will be required to participate in the system within the next few years.

Come See For Yourself

5. (SBU) The Minister is confident that the reform legislation, as drafted, far exceed Minister Magbool's commitments to Congress. He extended a personal invitation to members of Congress to "come and see" what is happening in Oman. The Minister said that the MOM is doing everything it can to "make it easier for Congress to pass the agreement."

Still Awaiting Technical Assistance

16. (U) In addition to learning about MOM labor developments, the Ambassador highlighted ongoing training opportunities with USDOL's Bureau of Labor Statistics, as well as in trafficking in persons. Although the Minister was very interested in statistical training, he reiterated the MOM's previous requests for technical assistance for MOM staff, as well as for the growing labor unions.
GRAPPO